



SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME

Public Health Guidance for Community-Level Preparedness and Response to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Version 2

Supplement G: Communication and Education

V. Communications Activities in the Presence of SARS

Objective 1: Coordinate local/state and national communications efforts related to SARS.

Activities

- Make every effort to work in close consultation with CDC communications colleagues to ensure a consistent and accurate communications response.
- In the event of a widespread SARS outbreak in the United States, it may be necessary to establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) in field locations where outbreak(s) are occurring. Most state and local jurisdictions currently have plans in place to facilitate such an installation if necessary. The JIC will become operational at the beginning of an HHS-wide federal response to the outbreak and will consist of representatives from all local, state, and federal agencies involved in the outbreak response. States and localities will coordinate all communication activities through the JIC or through an emergency communications center if the JIC has not been activated. The CDC Director's Emergency Operations Center (DEOC) will coordinate CDC's interface with the JIC. Additional information on the JIC is provided in Appendix G1.
- Interact, as appropriate, with CDC's Emergency Communication System (ECS). Once SARS activity is confirmed, CDC will activate the ECS to serve as a resource to state and local communications personnel and coordinate the federal public health communication response. ECS will direct all CDC SARS-related communication activities, including communication strategy development, key message development, CDC website management, materials development and dissemination, national media relations, media monitoring, and all other national communication components. Some ECS staff will be designated to focus on national level issues, whereas others will coordinate field personnel. The ECS will fully support JIC activities.
- Interact, as appropriate, with federal communication liaisons. To better understand and to encourage a reciprocal relationship between state and local communication officials, it is important to understand the roles of the federal communication liaisons in relation to the communications portion of the SARS response plan. Additional information can be found in Appendix G2.
- Harmonize messages used at the national and local levels (see Key Messages above).

Objective 2: Keep communications staff informed and ready with accurate, up-to-date information that is relevant to the situation in the jurisdiction.

Activities

- Establish a procedure for release of daily case counts at a specified time and location (e.g., website).
- Develop a "library" of SARS-related material for reference. Local and state health departments should develop a listing of SARS resources and references that can be readily available to communications and public information officers. Although information on SARS is available from multiple sources, CDC's website offers the most up-to-date official information. Local and state health departments should visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/> for

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updated guidance, protocols, press releases, travel advisories, and educational materials in other languages.

- Equip all communications staff with a resource booklet identifying websites relating to SARS. Have the information technology department bookmark these links on staff members' workstations.
- Maintain a library of relevant articles and publications in hard copy for use during field operations.
- Know the community. Ensure that communication materials address the language needs and cultural aspects of the affected community.
- Know your hotlines. Hotlines can provide ongoing guidance on new messages and materials that need to be developed to respond to public inquiries and concerns.
- Coordinate and maintain communication with local partners, such as:
 - Public affairs directors and information officers from local and state health departments
 - City and state government public affairs offices
 - Local congressional delegation and offices
 - Local police and fire departments and emergency management officials
 - Regional HHS health officers and regional Office of Emergency Preparedness
 - Local hospital public relations/affairs departments
 - State and local Emergency Operations Center coordinators
 - Federal Emergency Operations Centers

Objective 3: Communicate key messages, and provide up-to-date information on global and domestic SARS activity.

Activities

- Participate in and make available federal agency telebriefings and satellite broadcasts on SARS.
- Use websites as a central component in managing information requests from the public. Strategically designed websites can be used to organize and quickly provide information, updates, fact sheets, responses to frequently asked questions, healthcare provider resources, and media materials to a range of audiences.
- Provide information for travelers. SARS activity anywhere in the world will prompt immediate attention to travelers' movements to and from affected areas and will likely result in travelers' alert messages and surveillance at relevant ports of entry.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (Español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY)